

CIA Activities Contributing to Public
Understanding of Intelligence and the CIA

Center for the Study of
Intelligence, OTR

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The following survey of current CIA activities that contribute to public understanding of CIA and the role of intelligence was undertaken by the Center for the Study of Intelligence in OTR. It is intended as a first step in responding to the Management Committee's request of 20 Nov '74 that the Center study options to improve public understanding of intelligence. The survey is based on the responses by each Directorate to a request from the Director of Training for information on briefings, speeches and other public activities carried out by their officers.

CONCLUSIONS

Since January 1974, briefings and speeches by CIA officers specifically designed to inform the public about the CIA have been delivered to audiences totaling between six and seven thousand people. Of this number some four thousand have been high school students reached through the Presidential Classroom program. At least half of the balance, or some 1500, have been college or high school students primarily in East Coast or local institutions. The briefings of businessmen who attend a Brookings program are another sizeable fraction. The direct Agency impact on the public in the nation at large, however, is at best marginal.

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The CIA's public image also gains from the participation of CIA employees in certain external training programs, and from employee participation in academic activities and professional societies related to their professional assignments. Since January 1974, there have been approximately 800 instances of such activities by Agency employees, with a wide variation in terms of the opportunity provided to represent the CIA and inform elements of the public concerning the Agency. The collective impact of such activities in enhancing the image of the Agency has been widely acknowledged by outside observers over the years. A similar type of impact has been achieved through the release of substantive Agency analytical publications into public channels.

The existing Agency issuances about itself and the materials describing CIA which are used as background material by employees participating in public activities are outdated and inadequate, especially with regard to CIA's current environment.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the small number of Americans touched directly by CIA spokesmen and the continuing lack of understanding of the Agency and the role of foreign intelligence in the U.S., the total current CIA program to inform the American public can

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only be regarded as exceedingly modest. We believe the Management Committee should consider:

1. A limited expansion of briefings and speeches about the Agency. Such an expansion appears feasible from the resource standpoint and should involve both top and middle-level Agency officers, as well as briefing officers from OTR.
2. A study of what audiences the Agency should be trying to reach in our program and ways to stimulate interest in hearing about us in place of our present reactive posture, without raising the cry that we are "selling" ourselves.
3. The creation of a mechanism in the Agency for the regular review of substantive papers with a view to a limited increase in the release of such material into public channels.
4. An updating and expansion of the somewhat scanty background materials now available on the Agency, with the particular intention of making them more relevant to the current

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criticism and environment concerning the CIA.

These materials would be made available to officers in contact with the public.

5. Insofar as the creation of totally new programs of activities designed to enhance the Agency's image, there are none that appear feasible or appropriate to us in the present circumstances. It appears that a more realistic and feasible course would be an expansion and a better focusing of our present endeavors.

If the Committee believes that the general recommendations above warrant further consideration, it suggested that they direct the formation of a broad-based, ad hoc committee to generate specific action proposals.

CURRENT PUBLIC ACTIVITIES

For purposes of this survey, we have divided the activities described in the original responses and from information developed by supplementary inquiries to the Directorates into several categories. These categories, which reflect the

-4-

SECRET

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importance of the activities as communication channels to the public,* are:

1. On-the-record statements by the DCI about the Agency which receive media coverage.
2. Regular programs of briefings specifically intended to provide general information about the Agency to elements of the public.
3. Ad hoc briefings which result in the transmission of some general information about the Agency, although in some cases the main purpose of the briefings may be more narrow.
4. Contacts with elements of the public by identified Agency employees that often result in the transmission of some information about the Agency or that tend to demonstrate the professional competence of Agency personnel.

*This survey concentrates on Agency activities that impact on elements of the public apart from personnel in other government agencies and the military. We have also excluded CIA's direct contacts with the press under the aegis of the Assistant to the Director.

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5. Intangible activities such as the public release of Agency publications that are generally agreed to have a positive impact on our image, yet the extent and significance of this impact is even less susceptible to assessment than categories 1-4.

There does not appear to be any feasible way to compare the extent and the impact of the Agency's public relations activities with those of other government or corporate entities. It is questionable whether any such comparison, say with Defense, ACDA or NASA--all of which have also been on defensive wickets in recent years--is appropriate given the CIA's unique concerns with secrecy and protection of sources. Thus we have attempted to describe in general terms those elements of the Agency effort which seem to have been most profitable in the past, arbitrarily choosing the period January 1974 to the present as our frame of reference, and identifying prospective areas for further study and expansion in instances where it appeared appropriate and the resource cost would not be substantial.

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Public Presentations by the DCI

As a means of providing information on the CIA to the public, the on-the-record presentations by the DCI obviously have the widest impact of any Agency activity because of their authoritative nature and the extent of media coverage. Since January 1974, Mr. Colby has made four on-the-record speeches to groups including the World Affairs Council and the annual meeting of the Associated Press. All of these addresses have dealt in part with the role of intelligence and the CIA today in U.S. society and government. There has also been media coverage of Mr. Colby's statements to congressional committees concerning the role of the Agency and on amendments proposed to CIA's legal authorities.

Our review of the media coverage of these speeches, statements, and several magazine interviews by the DCI indicates that, in net, the coverage and reaction was favorable. While there may be a point of diminishing returns to be reached in on-the-record appearances by top-level Agency figures, it does not appear that we have yet reached this point by any means and there is probably room for some increase--perhaps a doubling--in the frequency of such efforts. Our review of media coverage indicates that the theme of the

-7-

SECRET

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SECRET

importance of CIA in the present national security environment has struck a receptive chord--particularly in the media outside the Eastern liberal press.

Regular Briefing Programs

In the realm of regular programs specifically designed to provide general information about the Agency to members of the public, there are two activities which, in the aggregate, reach only a numerically small, but nonetheless significant element of the public.

The most important regular program is the Brookings briefing series under which groups of about 30 middle to upper level corporate executives are given a briefing and Q&A session at the CIA by senior Agency officials ten times a year. Almost 600 executives have been reached through this program and two other similar Brookings-sponsored briefings since January 1974. The Agency has received numerous letters of appreciation for these briefings from recipients indicating that they left the briefing with a better understanding and appreciation for the CIA and its professional competence and value.

Another regular Agency public relations activity is conducted by the OTR Briefing Officer in the annual series

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of briefings to the Presidential Classroom program. Nearly 4000 high school students from throughout the nation and about 140 teachers have attended briefings on the Agency since January 1974. The reaction is excellent, as student ratings of the program have demonstrated over the past two years. This program provides the only significant, direct CIA impact on this important age bracket of the public in the nation at large.

Ad hoc Briefings

Since January 1974, the Agency has conducted about 60 briefings on an ad hoc basis which reached about 2100 members of the public directly. Many of these were intended specifically to provide general information on the Agency. Also, many of these briefings were strictly reactive, in the sense that the Agency did not take the initiative, but received a one time invitation to make a presentation.

Examples of such briefings have been those by the Briefing Officer and other OTR personnel to groups of local high school students. There have been six such general briefings about the Agency to about 375 students since January 1974. The OTR Briefing Officer also presented

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briefings on the Agency to approximately 100 members of local civic groups and to 175 military reservists and government interns.

Consideration should be given to an expansion of these presentations, and also which target audiences we should be trying to reach, and to ways for putting these presentations on less of a hit-or-miss basis. Should we be making a greater effort to reach college students and faculty or civic groups outside the Washington area? Rotarians, Lions, and Optimists are often leaders of the local community. Some authorities feel they are often more important in influencing local public opinion than the national press. While the college campus is often critical, civic groups generally are neither anti-CIA nor pro-CIA. They could become supporters when they perceive that the Agency's role is vital to the nation's security and that we perform the role well. Our briefers have generally been well-received by these groups in the past. An expansion of ad hoc briefings should be large enough to permit some evaluation of the impact, but not enough to suggest that the Agency has embarked on a "selling" program.

-10-

SECRET

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SECRET

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Student Co-op Program

The Student co-op program conducted by the Office of Personnel appears to be an effective means of improving the Agency's image in the eyes of the students and educators touched by it. Since January 1974, some 40 students have been enrolled at one point or another from a large variety of colleges. The program requires that they spend the equivalent of three semesters with the CIA. It is evident that the majority of these students spread favorable reports on the Agency among their peers. An additional 500-700 students have been given general briefings on this program and the Agency by the administrator of the program.

College Groups and Job Applicants

In addition to the briefings in the ad hoc section above, about 700-800 college students have participated in different briefing sessions, most at CIA, since January 1974. A number of these briefings were primarily intended to provide information on the DDI and OWI, but some general information on the Agency was imparted. Well over half the college students briefed were from East Coast institutions. While difficult to assess, it does not appear that briefings of this type are having a significant impact on the college public at large.

-11-

SECRET

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Professional Contacts

Another facet of Agency activities that often results in providing information about CIA to the public and that helps transmit an impression of Agency professional competence includes the external training programs of identified Agency employees and the participation by overt employees in academic meetings and professional societies.

Each year the Agency sponsors between 3000 and 4000 employees in external training programs. Over 80 percent are overtly identified employees. Most of the programs are of such short duration or the content is such that the employee's impact on CIA relations with the public is negligible. The clear exception are Agency employees on full time academic sabbaticals where the individual has a chance to play a representational role. Such employees participate in academic and social functions that often provide an opportunity to pass along information about CIA. During the period since January 1974 slightly more than 60 identified employees have begun or ended full-time sabbaticals. Nearly two-thirds of these employees have studied in local colleges, with most of the balance attending other schools on the East Coast. Since January 1974, less than ten percent were at academic

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institutions elsewhere in the country. Thus, the impact on the public, or more pertinently on the academic community in the nation as a whole, through this form of external training has been negligible.

In addition to the full-time academic study, there have been 163 employees at one point or another since January 1974 enrolled full time in outside training passed on by the Training Selection Board. These include the various war colleges, several executive programs run by the Civil Service Commission and the Congressional Fellowship. Many of these programs involve a representational role by the employees and they certainly serve, as comments over the years have indicated, to enhance the Agency's standing with other government servants. There is not, however, any detectible direct impact on the public at large, as defined for purposes of this report, through the participants in Training Selection Board programs.

A meaningful, positive impact on elements of the public in academic circles has been achieved by the Agency as the result of the participation by Agency employees in academic meetings. According to the information obtained for this survey from the various directorates, since January 1974

-13-

SECRET

Approved For Release 2001/07/12 : CIA-RDP80-00630A000300120001-4

approximately 100 overtly identified Agency officers have visited American college campuses to speak before campus groups or classes or to participate as panelists or discussants in college course activities. In addition, there have been a significant number of visits for recruiting purposes at college campuses by representatives of offices in the DDI and the DDS&T. About three-fourths of the campuses visited by our employees were located on the East Coast.

In addition to the academic visits, about 600 overtly identified Agency employees have attended professional meetings and conferences since January 1974. The vast majority were passive participants; there were a representative number who presented papers or took part in panels or other discussion sessions at these conferences and thus brought their skills to the attention of the conferees. It is, of course, impossible to measure the precise impact of such outside professional participation by Agency employees. It is clear, however, that the overall impact is a highly positive one--a kind of bonus received by CIA in addition to the professional gain by the employee. There are many instances on record in which the colleges and societies have followed up the appearance of our employees by registering their appreciation and satisfaction with the presence of CIA people.

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It would appear that the scope of Agency participation in activities of this type is probably about as large as is warranted given the demands of regular business on the time of our employees.

Total Intangibles

Although the impact of most of the Agency contacts with the public as described in the sections above cannot be measured with any precision, there does appear to be general agreement that the reaction on the whole is positive. There are also several other categories of relationships between Agency employees and the public that are even less susceptible to assessment. These include the personal relationships between Agency employees and influential members of the public, such as professors or newsmen. They would also include the private church, civic and community activities of many overt Agency employees which doubtless have some positive impact mainly in the Washington area. The displays of the Office of Medical Service on drug abuse and heart disease detection in San Francisco, New York and Cincinnati during the last two years should also be accounted here, as should the large volume of contacts involving contractors and others of the public with the Office of Logistics, S&T offices and other

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elements. Collectively, activities of this type over the long run probably have a significant positive impact on the public. Stepping up this process, however, appears neither feasible or desirable.

Release of Substantive Publications

A positive impact similar to direct participation by Agency employees in outside professional activities has been derived from the some half dozen substantive Agency analytical publications which have found their way into public channels since January 1974. Some have gone to library repositories, others have been published as part of congressional studies or other public documents. Two recent such publications, one by OPR on future food and population trends and a Soviet economic forecast by OER, were promptly picked up by the media and given reviews that reflected favorably on the competence and value of the Agency's work.

We have in mind here publications which contain some narrative, analytical material, including judgments, assessments and the like that display to some extent the breadth and depth of the Agency's expertise and competence. The several atlases released would also fall in this category.

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of foreign officials, or charts of government structures, many of which are also released by the Agency into public channels.

Clearly, there are problems in determining the appropriateness for release of narrative, analytical materials, but it appears that some expansion of this activity--perhaps a doubling--would be useful and probably feasible from the standpoint of appropriate Agency publications. This would be in addition to the machine biographical listings and [REDACTED] materials which are now regularly released to university and other library repositories. At this point, the Agency has no mechanism for regular consideration of the release of substantive publications. Some consideration of the creation of such a review mechanism at an appropriate point in the Agency would seem worthwhile.

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businessmen. Although there is no way to quantify this impact, reaction over the years indicates that, on the whole, it is highly positive.

Additional Support Materials

We have reviewed the extant material in the Agency that is provided to external trainees and to others requesting it as background on the CIA prior to the individual having to discuss the Agency before some external group. This material is relatively scanty and consists for the most part of documents providing basic information on the Agency's structure and mission. In some ways, it is outdated and does not contain some useful basic material concerning the Agency now in the public domain without official acknowledgement. Lacking totally is any material specifically designed to support employees who may need to respond to questions that reflect the Agency's current situation. An updating and expansion of the basic background materials available on the Agency, and the development of supporting material around the theme of the Agency's importance to national security seems warranted. A document composed of questions and answers dealing with the present situation of the Agency drawing in part on the DCI's speeches and the experience of the OTR Briefing

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Officer could also be produced. The format could be that of an "official" publication or that of a quasi-official OTR study guide or working paper. After appropriate review, this material could be made available to CIA employees through OTR.

We believe it would also be useful to consider the development of a series of vignettes or case histories on actual CIA activities that could be used as background materials, possibly the Readers Digest-type articles, to help demonstrate the importance and utility of the Agency. These would be taken from instances already generally in the public domain. Some possibilities are:

- The intelligence role in the support of SALT which helped make the agreement possible.
- The role of intelligence, including clandestine reporting which led to later identification of the missiles by technical means in the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- Examples of the CIA role in the suppression of international terrorism and narcotics traffic.
- CIA and DIA work in developing information on Soviet conventional forces structure which

-19-

SECRET

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enabled the government to reduce our ground force and spend less on military procurement.

Any decision as to exactly how such materials would be used might be left until it is clear they can be successfully and persuasively developed.

Outside Speakers

Some enhancement of public understanding of the Agency is produced as a result of the use of outside speakers to address OTR courses. Since January 1974, 79 different speakers have participated in such courses. Thirty-one have appeared more than once, and 17 in more than one course. The speakers, most of whom are in academic positions, represent a wide range of substantive specialties covering such topics as labor, the media, foreign affairs, international and domestic economics, and the business community. To this should be added the participants in the CIA Guest Speaker Program held on a monthly basis in the Auditorium. There have been eleven guest speakers since January 1974 from the business, media and academic community.

There is no satisfactory way to measure the impact on these speakers of such exposure to the Agency, but they

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clearly gain in many cases an impression of the caliber of Agency officers and of our interests. We believe that a number of them, including several noted journalists, are considerably more sympathetic to the Agency as a result of these contacts.

-21-

SECRET

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